

Hills For Everyone

Friends of the
Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor



Newsletter No. 37

Fall 2017

Chino Hills State Park Legislative Champion Dies



Ross Johnson at the 1996 celebration.

Ross and HFE Executive Director Claire Schlotterbeck at a press conference in 1983.

With the passing of former State Senator and Assemblymember Ross Johnson on August 16th, our region lost a profoundly important visionary. Elected in 1978 to the State Assembly, Ross quickly made it known that he was interested in helping establish a State Park in the hills near Yorba Linda, Brea, and Chino Hills. At the time, a Joint Powers Authority was working to establish an International Airport in the hills to relieve pressure on LAX.

Ross threw his weight, skills, and interest into supporting Hills For Everyone's burgeoning effort to establish the Park. He literally sat down on the floor with us and looked at our maps to strategize on the acquisitions. He stayed with us every step of the way.

As soon as he was elected, he carried the ball in the Legislature to get funding to buy land. Ross once said "You can work miracles in Sacramento if you don't care who gets the credit." And he did just that. He worked miracles. At one point when acquisition funding was threatened, rather than lose the funding, he got the allocation doubled.

As a Republican, he worked across party lines to keep funding coming for over 20 years. Today, the 14,107 acre Chino Hills State Park lies at the juncture of three of California's most populous counties. There have been 34 acquisitions over 36 years, making it the most complicated set of acquisitions in California state park history. With

tenacity, effectiveness, and faithfulness, Ross stuck with us through these lengthy acquisitions. But the task is not yet finished. Ridgeline land in the City of Chino Hills still needs to be acquired. *(See the article on page 2.)*

Brea has reason to be especially grateful. In the mid 1970's, the City nominated 1,100 acres north of Carbon Canyon Road, for federal funding as the Brea Olinda Wilderness Park. When funding fell apart in 1980, Ross maneuvered to get the land added to the State Park as a potential acquisition. When the County of Orange attempted to ruin those plans with aggressive land acquisitions to expand Olinda Landfill, Ross made it clear that funding was forthcoming and the State was still interested. The County backed off, and the land was added to the State Park in 1996. This land became the link through Tonner Canyon to the Puente Hills.

In short, there would be no park without Ross. He was faithful in every way—at every moment. Whenever we needed him, he was there. When you look at the hills, please say a prayer of gratitude that this wonderful man and genuine representative came our way and secured this gift of beauty and respite for all of us.

We need to elect more representatives like Ross: people who value parkland and are willing to take risks and do the hard work to ensure we have it nearby.

Your Chance to Save Land

The eastern ridgeline of Chino Hills State Park is vulnerable to development. Two ridgeline parcels, not protected by the Park, are for sale—and voters will have a chance to fund their conservation. The first Park Bond in 15 years will be on the ballot in June 2018. We do not yet know the proposition number. By getting out and voting YES on this measure, we have the opportunity to fund the acquisition of these two properties and stop housing development threats there once and for all. It's in our hands!



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Preserve Hours Reduced

We know some folks are unhappy with the new hours for the Habitat Authority lands. We get it. Please understand that these changes were made in response to scientific studies showing that recreational overuse of the land is damaging the habitat. Preservation of habitat and biodiversity was the primary mission of these land purchases; recreational use is an added benefit.

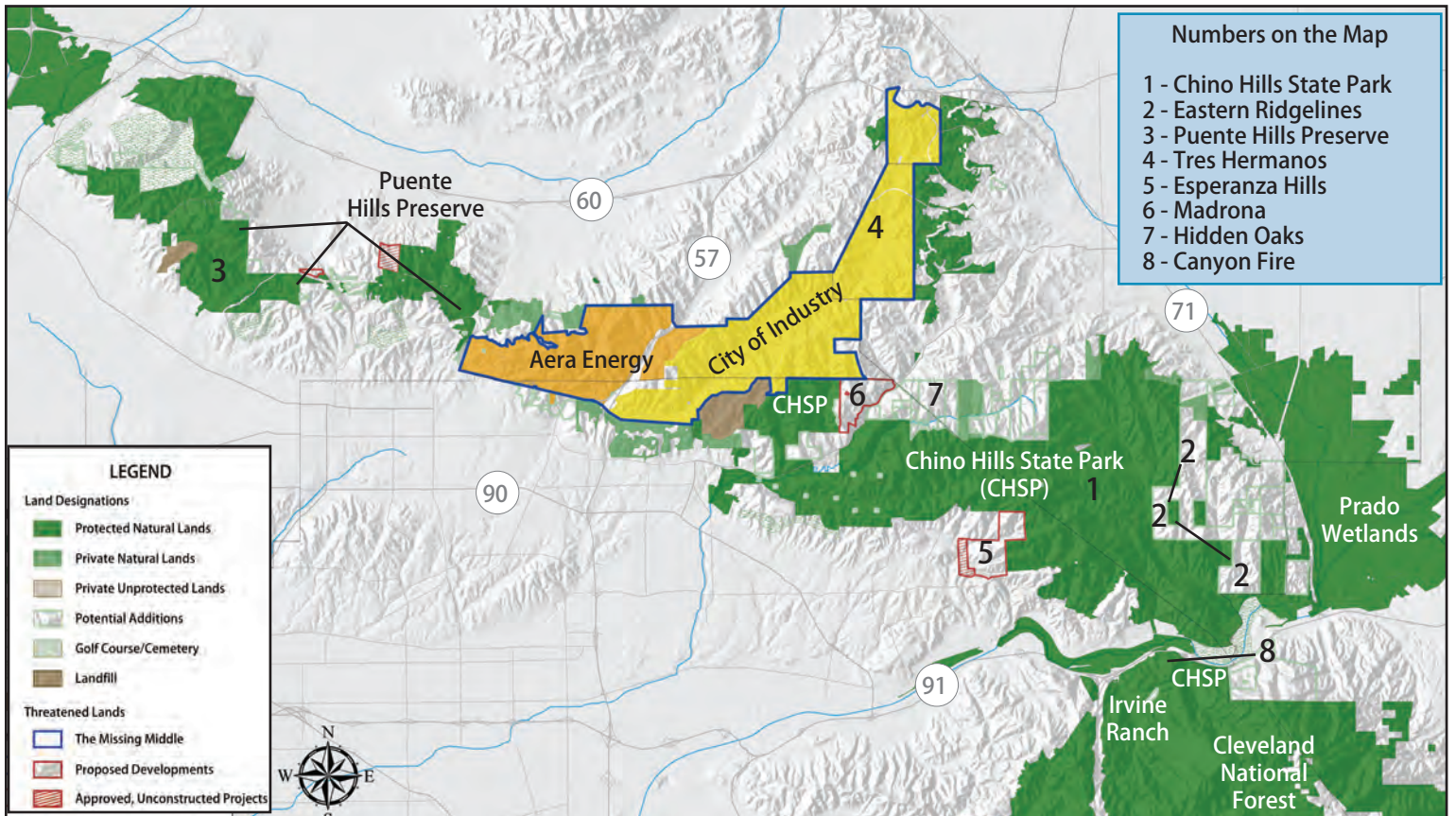
While to the casual observer, it may seem like wildlife is flourishing (for example, rabbits appear to be in abundance), in reality, measuring the health of the habitat is much more complex. Wildlife live in a constant state of jeopardy from all the nearby houses (pets, poison, and fencing) and from the simple daily quest for food. If we don't adjust our use of the park in favor of their health, we will be passing on an emptying landscape to the future.

We are working hard to acquire more land with trails, specifically the Aera Energy land along the 57 freeway and stopping Industry from destroying the 6,200 acres it owns in Tonner Canyon. Please spend your passion and energy helping us do that—we need your voices speaking up to save more land.



Melanie Schlotterbeck

Mapping the Corridor Projects



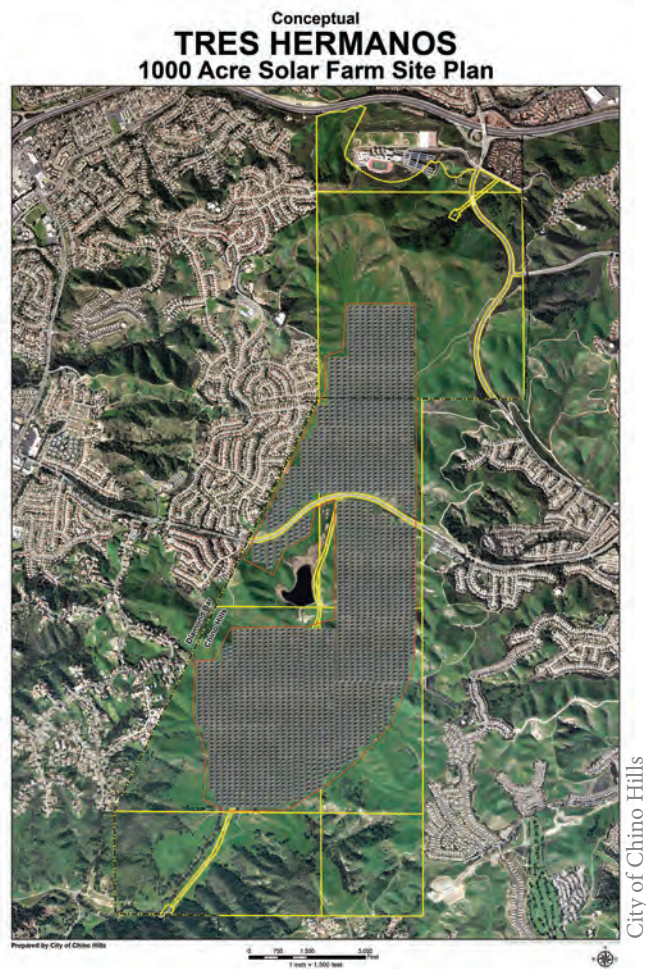
City of Industry Shenanigans Continue

The City of Industry was awarded the purchase of the 2,450 acre Tres Hermanos property that lies in the Cities of Chino Hills and Diamond Bar for \$60 million less than its \$101 million offer. In exchange for a “promise” that they would preserve some of the land, the Oversight Board cut the price by 60%, though no evidence was presented that this was a legitimate way to assess the value of the reduced price.

The Cities of Diamond Bar and Chino Hills have challenged the decision by appealing to the Department of Finance to reject the sale. Neither city wants to lose local control and turn the land use decisions over to the California Public Utilities Commission. Local control means conservationists have more tools to challenge poor planning decisions.

If Upper Tonner Canyon stays in the hands of the City of Industry, the middle and lower portion (the former Boy Scout Reservation) and a key wildlife movement corridor, will be much more vulnerable to the industrialization that Industry has in mind on the land it owns there.

Industry has said it wants to build a 444-megawatt solar factory that would consume 1,000 acres, leaving the rest as open space. However, shown right, is a mock-up of what a 120-megawatt factory would look like on Tres Hermanos. There is no room left for wildlife or people. The misinformation continues. Industry actually needs 3,300 acres to build a 444-megawatt solar factory. Solar panels are a great idea—on rooftops in Industry.



Project Updates

Esperanza Hills - Yorba Linda

The County of Orange approved the 340 unit Esperanza Hills project in May—this time with only one access road which empties onto a street which was gridlocked in the 2008 fire. They were promptly sued by residents and the neighboring developer. Those two lawsuits were recently consolidated. Two other lawsuits are still underway: the residents’ appeal of the original lawsuit, and the developer’s appeal of the awarding of the fees.



Madrona - Brea

The original decision on the developer’s appeal of our court victory was due last June, but the appellate panel delayed a decision until September, and then again until November 2017. The wait continues.

Hidden Oaks - Chino Hills

Release of the environmental documents for this 107-unit housing project on 537 acres in Carbon Canyon has been delayed. Should this project be approved, it would pollute western Soquel Creek, which is currently a completely intact watershed, undisturbed by urban impacts and used by wildlife as a refuge.

Canyon Fire - Anaheim

In late September, Chino Hills State Park suffered yet again another fire torching these overburned lands. The Canyon Fire blackened lands south of the 91 freeway, at Coal Canyon, scorching 2,662 acres—470 acres within the State Park. It reignited October 9th while at print.



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Three Easy Ways to Help

1 If you shop at Amazon, shop through AmazonSmile.org naming Hills For Everyone as your charity of choice. We'll receive a portion of the proceeds for all eligible sales.



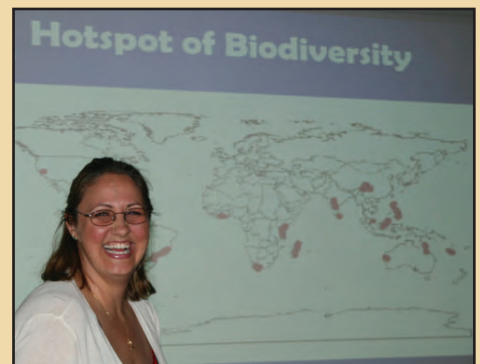
2 Each year, Ralphs food market requires participants to register anew in its Community Contributions Program. Whatever way you register, you'll need our organization number: 91199. If you are already registered, go to Ralphs.com and sign in by clicking on the "person" icon on the right. Click on the Community tab and then the Ralphs Community Contribution Program tab. First Timers: Create an account at Ralphs.com. Click on Community, click on Community Contributions, click on 'Enroll Now.'



3 What makes our hills so special? You do! And now you can ensure that the special qualities that brought you here are preserved for future generations. Hills For Everyone's Planned Giving Program enables you to leave a lasting statement about what is important to you. Contact us for details at: info@HillsForEveryone.org.

PowerPoints Available

Hills For Everyone representatives provide interesting presentations to local groups, clubs, and organizations. Topics may include biodiversity, achievements, threats or possibilities, the State Park's history, and/or the fire history of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. Schedule a presentation by emailing us at: info@HillsForEveryone.org.



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UPDATE

Esperanza Hills (Yorba Linda)

In last year's appeal, Protect Our Homes and Hills included four main issues that they had lost in the original suit. They were: 1) Project Description (adjacency to Chino Hills State Park), 2) Fire Evacuation and Access, 3) Biology (impacts to sensitive plant species), and 4) the project's Water Use. On Friday the 13th the 4th District Court of Appeals released its decision in our favor. The County now needs to recirculate the Esperanza Hills Environmental Impact Report because of its deficiencies and inadequate analysis on project description, fire evacuation/access, and water use. Another victory in Yorba Linda!!

Park Bond Signed by the Governor

Just before midnight on Sunday, October 15th—the legislative deadline for signing bills—Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 5 (the 2018 Park Bond Act). This means the Park Bond will be on the June 5, 2018 ballot. We still don't have a proposition number, but we will alert you when we have it.

UPDATE

Madrona (Brea)

We just received word from our attorneys at Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger that the 4th District Court of Appeals ruled in our favor on the Madrona project.

We are absolutely thrilled!

The court agreed with our position, stating that the Project violates the City of Brea General Plan, specifically its Woodland Protection policy, and that the Environmental Impact Report should have considered the grading standards in the Carbon Canyon Specific Plan.

The developer may opt to ask the Court to reconsider the decision or appeal it to the Supreme Court. While Hills For Everyone took the lead on this lawsuit, co-petitioners included California Native Plant Society; Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks; and Sierra Club.